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Notes and Opinions.

Principal Fairbairn on "Christ's Attitude to His Own Death."—Principal Fairbairn has four papers on "Christ's Attitude to His Own Death" in the *Expositor*, the last being in the February number for 1897.

The aim of the writer is to show (1) that Christ regarded his death as sacrificial, and (2) that the sacrifice was in his *will*, and not his physical sufferings.

The *first* position is confirmed by the prophetic statements of Jesus himself, which grow more and more explicit during his ministry and culminate at the passover-supper.

Dr. Fairbairn has done good service in presenting this rather neglected side of the *atonement*. Theology has made the man-word side so prominent—sin's necessity of sacrifice—that the attitude of the Sacrificer Himself has been assumed, rather than proved. This has led hostile minds to assert that the sacrificial element in the death of Christ is the outgrowth of pagan conceptions of man's relation to God, or at the best is but an apostolic after-thought.

Paul has been made the father of the atoning idea, rather than Christ. It is very important, therefore, to bring out what Jesus himself says, and which shows that the apostles simply borrowed from him as the original source. The prophets had the beginnings of this conception, but John the Baptist was the first to see its outline clearly, and "Behold the Lamb of God" is the announcement of his discovery. When John's voice was suppressed within prison walls, Jesus himself took up the prophecy, and daily entered into its fulfilment until his victorious cry on the cross, *It is finished!*

The *second* point, emphasized by Dr. Fairbairn is that the sacrifice of Christ was in his *will* rather than his *physical sufferings*. These latter were indeed terrible, and intensified the awfulness of his sufferings, and yet they were but the ritual of the *sacrifice*. The real essence of the atonement was in the absolute and peaceful surrender of Christ's *will* to his Father in behalf of sinful man. The principle of the atonement is spiritual, not physical. The emphasis of the physical has produced

mechanical and metaphysical theories which have utterly failed to show the nexus between sinner and savior. Perhaps no theory can show this perfectly, but the spiritual principle of the atonement seems to furnish the most natural explanation.

If the sacrifice was in the voluntary and perfect obedience of Christ to his Father's will, and so through a man, and for man, becoming one with the Father, may we not say that man, divinely aided, by the voluntary and entire submission of his will to Christ, becomes one with him, and, through him, one with the Father? Obedience is the aim of the atonement.

This Christ fulfilled as a man, his suffering being intensified by the cruelty of his foes and the betrayal of his friends. It was an unutterable sorrow to him that what he did to bless and save should by any be turned to a curse and loss. But this suffering, after all, was not sacrificial in itself, but only incidental as a test of his will-power of obedience to his Father, as an offering for sin. This obedience was in behalf of others rather than a test of his own loyalty to God, and, therefore, his death was for more than a martyrdom. Obedience is better than sacrifice. By faith man grasps Christ's obedience to God as rendered for him, and which begets in him a willing submission to the will of Christ. The blood cleanses, not as blood, but as the evidence of obedience, which changes sin and the love of sin into a loving life of holiness.

W. M. LISLE.

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The cut upon the cover of this number is a slightly altered reproduction of the famous frescoe of Raphael in the Vatican, "The Release of Peter from Prison." In the original the effect of the illumination by the angel who bends over the sleeping apostle is far more remarkable than in any photographic reproduction, but even in such a reproduction one cannot fail to be impressed with the unity of the picture's combination,—a characteristic of Raphael— as well as by the brilliancy of treatment.